NEWS ANALYSIS 1-0553 APRIL 10, 1976
FRED GALVAN

TENTATIVE ON-SITE INSPECTION ACCORD

ANNCR:

NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN EXAMINES THE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES ON MUTUAL, FIRST-HAND INSPECTION OF EACH OTHER'S PEACEFUL NUCLEAR UNDERGROUND TESTS.

VOICE:

THE AGREEMENT, FIRST ANNOUNCED IN MOSCOW FRIDAY BY U.S. AMBASSADOR (WALTER) STOESSEL, HAS PRODUCED RIPPLES OF CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM HERE IN WASHINGTON. FOR AT LEAST IN PRINCIPLE IT POINTS THE WAY TOWARD SETTLING AN ISSUE THAT HAS PLAGUED NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES ON MILITARY AND PEACEFUL USES OF NUCLEAR ENERGY FOR MANY YEARS. THAT ISSUE IS HOW EACH NUCLEAR POWER CAN VERIFY THROUGH ON-SITE INSPECTION WHAT THE OTHER IS DOING IN THE TESTING AND MANUFACTURE OF NUCLEAR MATERIALS FOR PEACEFUL AND MILITARY USE. FOR SOME THIRTY YEARS THE UNITED STATES HAS STRONGLY ADVOCATED ON-SITE INSPECTION AS THE MOST FAIL-PROOF SYSTEM OF VERIFICATION. AND THE SOVIET UNION HAS OPPOSED IT. WITH THE AGREEMENT TENTATIVELY REACHED, THAT LOGJAM SEEMS TO BE AT LEAST BEGINNING TO CRUMBLE.

IF AND WHEN THE TENTATIVE ACCORD IS SIGNED BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS, IT WILL PAVE THE WAY FOR PUTTING INTO EFFECT A FURTHER AGREEMENT BETWEEN THEM WHICH WOULD PROHIBIT UNDERGROUND TESTS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS PRODUCING AN EXPLOSIVE FORCE OF MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED FIFTY KILOTONS. THAT IS THE EQUIVALENT OF ONE HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND TONS OF DYNAMITE.

BOTH THE AGREEMENT ANNOUNCED FRIDAY AND THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS TEST ACCORD WERE CONCEIVED IN PRINCIPLE AT THE MOSCOW SUMMIT TWO

YEARS AGO. THAT THEY SHOULD BE LINKED IS LOGICAL. FOR, AS SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER TOLD REPORTERS HERE IN WASHINGTON FRIDAY: "WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT PEACEFUL NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS ARE NOT USED TO MASK MILITARY PURPOSES." HE POINTED OUT THAT--IN HIS WORDS--"THE ISSUE OF ON-SITE INSPECTION ARISES BECAUSE PEACEFUL NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS MAY BE USED IN ORDER OF MAGNITUDE COMPARABLE TO THOSE THAT ARE PROHIBITED FOR MILITARY USES." THAT IS WHY, HE SAID, FRIDAY'S AGREEMENT WAS AN "IMPORTANT, SYMBOLIC STEP."

BUT BEYOND THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF FRIDAY'S TENTATIVE ACCORD, IT HAS A DEEPER MEANING OF CURRENT IMPORTANCE. FOR IT SHOWS THAT NEITHER THE UNITED STATES NOR THE SOVIET UNION ARE GOING TO ALLOW RECENT TENSIONS BETWEEN THEM OVER SUCH ISSUES AS ANGOLA TO DIVERT THEM FROM THEIR OVER-RIDING AIM. THAT PURPOSE IS TO BRING THE NUCLEAR PROBLEM UNDER SOME FORM OF DISCIPLINE. BOTH GOVERNMENTS CONTINUE TO RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS NO MORE CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING THEM OR THE REST OF MANKIND.

SECRETARY KISSINGER REFLECTED THIS WHEN HE SAID FRIDAY: "WITH ALL THE TENSIONS AND DIFFICULTIES, WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO THE FUTURE TO BRING THE NUCLEAR PROBLEM UNDER CONTROL. THIS IS A STEP IN THAT DIRECTION."

PCA/FFG